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WEST GERMANY:

The Spider's Web

They were a fashionable young career couple who drove a \$15,000 Jaguar and rented a handsome house in the suburbs of Bonn. They were also crack Communist spies. For ten years, Lothar-Erwin Lutze, 36, and his wife, Renate, 36, allegedly passed some of NATO's most vital war-contingency plans to East Germany. Early this month, West Germany's counterespionage agency, the Federal

Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), seized the Lutzes in a series of raids that continued into last week and brought the total number of arrests in West Germany's latest spy crackdown to 21—the largest haul in the country's history. "None got away," boasted a BfV agent. "We killed the spiders in their webs."

Among the suspects rounded up last week were Heinrich Burger, 35, press spokesman for the ruling Social Democratic Party in West Berlin, and his former wife, Kathryn, 30. Mrs. Burger reportedly informed on her ex-husband while he was vacationing with another woman in Portugal. Incredibly, police let her slip through their fingers and she fled to East Berlin. Three days later she returned to the West, claiming to have been treated for a nervous breakdown in East Berlin (Western officials called her treatment brainwashing) and repudiated all her earlier testimony.

Despite the fuss over the Burger case, the Lutzes were the prize catch. Intelligence sources in Bonn said the couple probably siphoned off even more top-secret material than Günter Guillaume, the aide to Willy Brandt whose exposure in 1974 as an East German agent forced Brandt to resign as Chancellor. Lutze worked on research contracts for the Defense Ministry, while his wife was secretary to the ministry's personnel chief. They allegedly sent top-secret files, cables and research information to East Germany. "The amount of stuff that was spilled is so huge that we still don't know how much it was," a top BfV official told NEWSWEEK. "Of course, in six months we'll have changed everything again."

Bumbling: The spy hunt was begun after the Guillaume scandal. Brandt's successor as Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, handpicked zealous, 48-year-old Richard Meier, then director of West Germany's counterpart to the CIA, to overhaul the country's bumbling counterespionage service. Meier immediately began months of wiretapping, surveillance and infiltration and used a computer to piece together hundreds of leads.

Then he sprang his traps. The most important of the suspects arrested may turn out to be a still-unidentified Lutze contact—referred to as Mr. or Mrs. X in the German press—who intelligence officials hope will blow the cover off East Germany's operations in the West.

Those operations are still substantial. East Germany has infested West Germany with several hundred important spies and as many as 6,000 lesser ones, many of whom steal technological information. But for the moment, West German intelligence agents were crowing over their success. "Never have so many big fish been caught at one stroke," said back. The biggest winner of all may be Schmidt, who faces a national election this fall. In West Germany, successful